

# CBD usage and attitudes in South Africa: research reveals strong consumer interest in the category

By [Candice Pillay](#), issued by [KLA](#)

22 Feb 2022

For the past four years there has been a growing demand in the cannabinoid or CBD market, fuelled by increasing global trends and changing local legislation. In 2018 we saw the legalisation of cannabis for personal consumption, while CBD products with a quantity less than 20mg for daily dose were legalised in 2019. These changes have opened the market and contributed towards international market growth which is predicted to grow to \$91,5bn by 2028.



Candice Pillay

Since the legalisation, we've seen an emergence of CBD suppliers in South Africa in established retailers, niche specialist stores, as well as on social media. As a relatively new category and product, with a range of health and wellness benefits claimed, how do South Africans use and perceive CBD products, and where is the potential for this category going forward? Beyond residual stigma-related perceptions, what are the key barriers to overcome?

KLA investigated this with an online survey (n=501) via our YourView online research panel (in November 2021), with some interesting results.

## Understanding has enabled high levels of trial

For the majority, there is a general understanding as to what CBD is; 88% understand it to be a chemical that derives from cannabis or hemp that does not have any psychoactive effects. The high rate of understanding is one of the factors that enable a willingness to try CBD products, with 71% having

tried them at least once.

Overall, there is a considerable interest to try CBD products, with 27% saying they would be interested in trying them in the future (having never tried them before). And only 12% said that they have not tried them, nor are they interested in trying them.

## There are several benefits to enable trial

Most (76%) feel that CBD products are best suited to help with stress and anxiety. In addition, 54% believe they improve sleep, 48% believe they relieve muscle pain, and inflammation, and 45% feel they help with headaches and migraines.

Only 3% believe CBD products have no benefits, but 27% feel they are mainly for recreational purposes.

Interestingly, among the more mature age groups, we see higher interest to try CBD products (37% of 45- 50-year-olds are interested in trial, and 48% of 55-year-olds are interested in trial) with the belief that it is effective in assisting with muscle pain and inflammation as well as joint pain.

What do you think CBD and CBD products help with?	44-55 years	55 years +
It relieves muscle pain and inflammation	74%	61%
It relieves joint pain	71%	58%

**CBD products have a foot in the door. However, there are barriers to usage and regular usage is low.**

Given that CBD products are relatively new to the market, there are price-ceilings that restrict many South African from purchasing frequently. It is still a relatively niche offering, that is not always readily available to the mass market. This clearly shows in the research, where 29% are apprehensive about using CBD products based on affordability, and 15% feel the lack of availability prohibits them from using CBD products.

While the potential for misinformation presents itself as a minor barrier, 20% are apprehensive about using CBD due to the perceived legal implications.

While these barriers are not considerable, price and affordability would certainly play a key role, and may have something to do with the high trial but low regular usage - only 15% are using CBD products regularly (once a week) and 23% are using them once a month.

Which one of the following apply to you with regards to your relationship with CBD and CBD product? n=501	
I use CBD and CBD products regularly (i.e. at least once a week)	15%
I use CBD and CBD products occasionally (i.e. once or a few times a month)	23%
I have tried CBD and CBD products once or twice	23%
I have never tried CBD or CBD products, but I am willing to give it a try	27%
I have never tried CBD or CBD products and I am not intending to give it a try	12%

### Channels to purchase: retailers lead, but close contacts are trusted.

In-store retailers such as Clicks and Dischem are the leading stores that sell CBD products (39%), while 34% of respondents purchased based on personal referral, 32% have purchased online, 29% from a friend, and 26% have purchased via social media.

This would indicate that respondents are more likely to purchase CBD products from a reliable and trusted source. When making a first-time purchase, it is likely to be through a recommendation from someone known and trusted.

Specialist stores (such as GoodLeaf) were reported as a route to purchase for 24% of respondents, which could correlate to affordability and availability. Respondents may have more of a difficult time accessing speciality stores as these sell at a steeper price, and at a less convenient location.

### Opportunities to grow the category

It is evident in the research that CBD products have managed to position themselves in this category as a viable option. To enable regular usage, perceptions around benefits, affordability, accessibility, and legalities would need to be adjusted. Education is a fundamental step in shifting these perceptions, as lack of knowledge, mass misinformation, and stigmatisation hinder growth of the industry. The lack of education creates uncertainty around legalities. As it stands, CBD products with a daily 20mg dosage are considered legal, while higher doses require a prescription. Currently, the Cannabis for Private Purposes Bill is being reviewed by parliament which aims to further commercialise the industry. Due to limited information, there is also apprehension regarding the benefits and reliability of CBD products, which impacts price perceptions. To move forward, consumers would need more information to validate the price points. There are vast parts of the category that have been untapped due to this hinderance. Shifting perceptions would enable further growth and with this growth, CBD products would become more accessible to the mass market.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Candice Pillay is the Insights Associate at KLA. As one of the first graduates to be a part of KLA's graduate programme, Candice works in both quantitative and qualitative research and is intrigued by individual stories that contribute to the collective experience. She holds a BA and BCOM degree with majors in Psychology and Marketing.

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